

“Influences on the Propensity to Enlist”

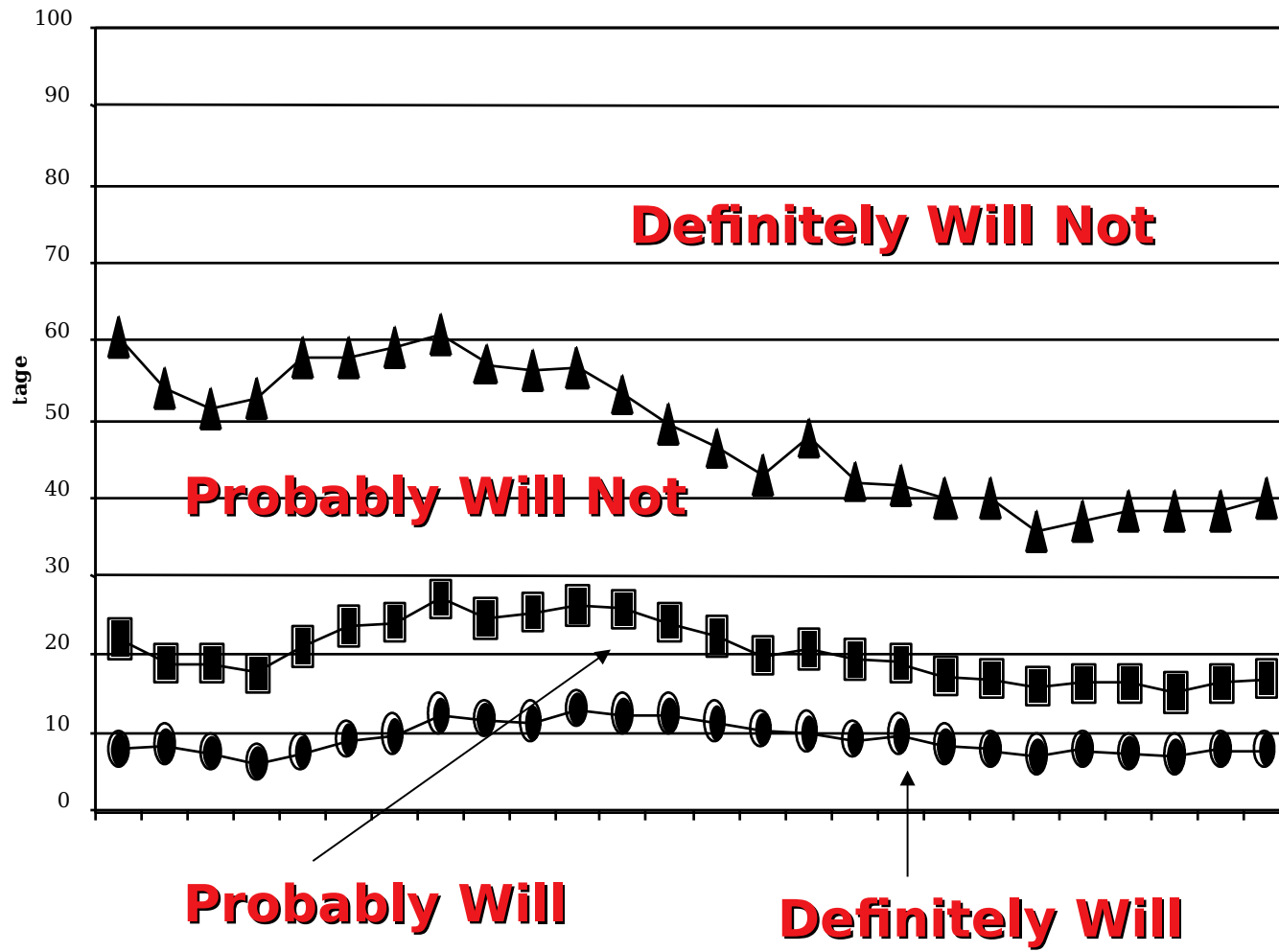
John Eighmey

Raymond O. Mithun Chair in Advertising
University of Minnesota

May 21, 2003

Contact Info: eighmey@umn.edu

Propensity to Enlist: Male HS Seniors, 1976 to 2001



Source: Monitoring the Future Project

“Influences on the Propensity to Enlist”

Problem

Propensity to enlist has been declining to the point there are questions concerning sustainability of the AVF.

Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives

Demographic projections of qualified youth indicate sufficient numbers of youth for the next 20 years.

Employment of perspectives such as the Theory of Reasoned Action and models of cognitive elaboration indicate study of youth attitudes, values and media use are key to more effective use of advertising and

Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS)

The Department of Defense conducts surveys of the propensity of youth to join the military and the role of advertising and other forms of influence.

Fall, 1999 YATS

- **10,054 telephone interviews completed**
- **68 % completion rate**
- **Age range of 16 to 24**
- **30-minute interview**
- **Numerous questions**
- **Time limit required skip patterns**
- **Skip patterns lead to some analytical challenges**

Analytical Plan

Secondary Analysis of 1999 YATS Data

Youth Attitude Tracking Survey (YATS) provides an opportunity for secondary analysis with measures of elaboration, reasons for interest in the military, propensity to enlist, media use, advertising recall, and personal contacts (such as family members, friends, and recruiters).

Measures of Reasons for Joining, Elaboration, and Propensity

YATS question 525 asked about the extent of elaboration; question 526a1 provided an indication of respondents' cognitive and value oriented reasons for joining the military; and, questions 438a, 503, and 517 were combined into an index of propensity to enlist.

Relationships Examined

Measure of Reported Consideration as an Indication of Elaboration

Question number 525 measured the extent of consideration or interest in the military reported in three closed-ended responses. Consideration can be thought of as an aspect of elaboration, with “some consideration” reflecting the onset of elaboration and “serious consideration” reflecting higher level interest that may be associated with more extensive consideration.

“Before we talked today, had you ever considered the possibility of joining the military?”

“Would you say...”

Q525	You never thought about it	23.3 %
	You gave it some consideration	54.7

Cognitive and Value Oriented Reasons for Joining the Military

The decision to enlist involves both cognitive and value considerations. Cognitive responses are seen as indicating a means-ends or purposive frame, while value oriented responses reflect a normative frame.

Cognitive Frame: Considerations leading to attainment of specific ends. Recruiters describe this as the dominant “What’s in it for me?” viewpoint.

- Money for education
- Job related skills
- Pay, retirement benefits, and job security

Value Frame: Considerations adhering to social norms and values. Recruiters say they encounter this viewpoint less frequently now.

- Duty to country, national defense
- Family tradition

Measure of Cognitive and Value Oriented Reasons to Join the Military

YATS question 526a1 provided respondents' first open-ended responses to the reasons they might be interested in joining the military. The open-ended responses are grouped in the cognitive and value oriented frames.

"If you were to join the military, what would be the main reasons?"

Cognitive frame responses were given by about 60 percent of respondents.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| • Pay for education | 27.1% |
| • Develop work skills | 12.6 |
| • Pay | 10.9 |
| • Job security | 2.9 |
| • Retirement benefits | 1.9 |

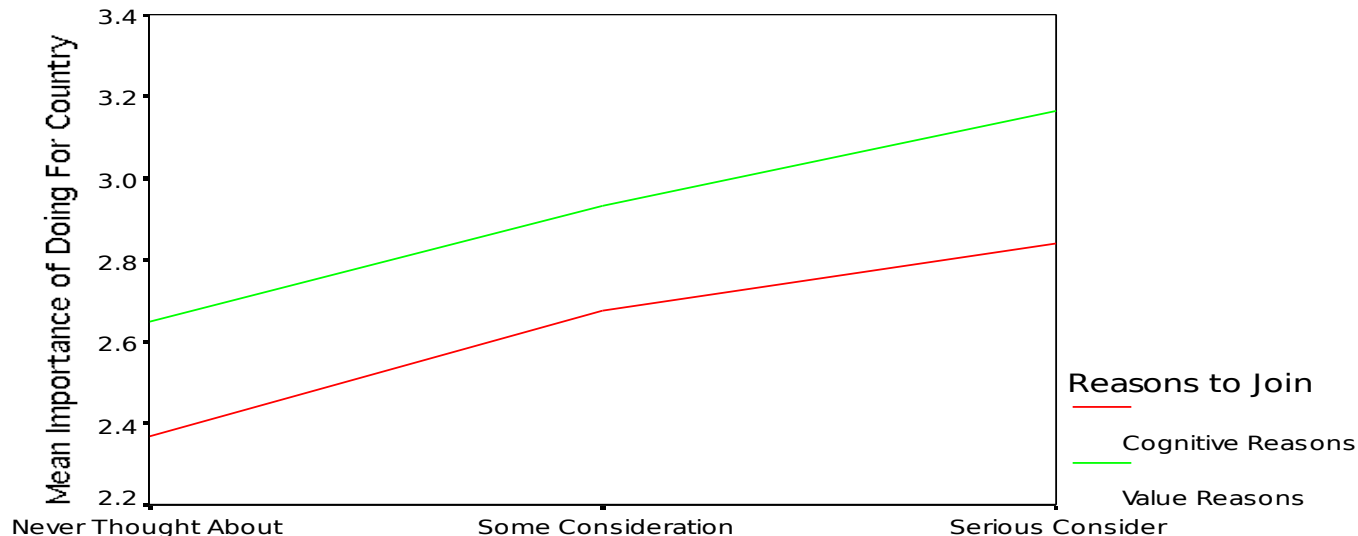
Value frame responses were given by about 25 percent of respondents.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| • Duty to country | 8.4 |
|-------------------|-----|

Q526a1 (First open-ended response given by each respondent. 62 percent gave

Cognitive and Value Frame Respondents Differ in Their Views of the Importance of Duty to Country

The posited distinctions between cognitive and value oriented reasons to join can also be examined using a questionnaire item rating the importance of duty to country (Q529rlp). The main effect of elaboration (0.0001) indicates increasing levels of elaboration relate to increasing importance of duty to country. The main effect of reason to join (0.0001) indicates that, as expected, cognitive frame respondents rate the importance of duty to country higher than value frame respondents.



An Index of Propensity to Enlist

A composite index can be computed by the addition of three measures of propensity to enlist in the military. The items are conceptually consistent. However, the limited ranges and skewed distributions of the three items produce a seemingly low reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.42$). The average index score is 1.63.

1. Lowest value	57.2 %
2.	30.6
3.	7.8
4.	2.1
5.	1.4
6. Highest value	1.0

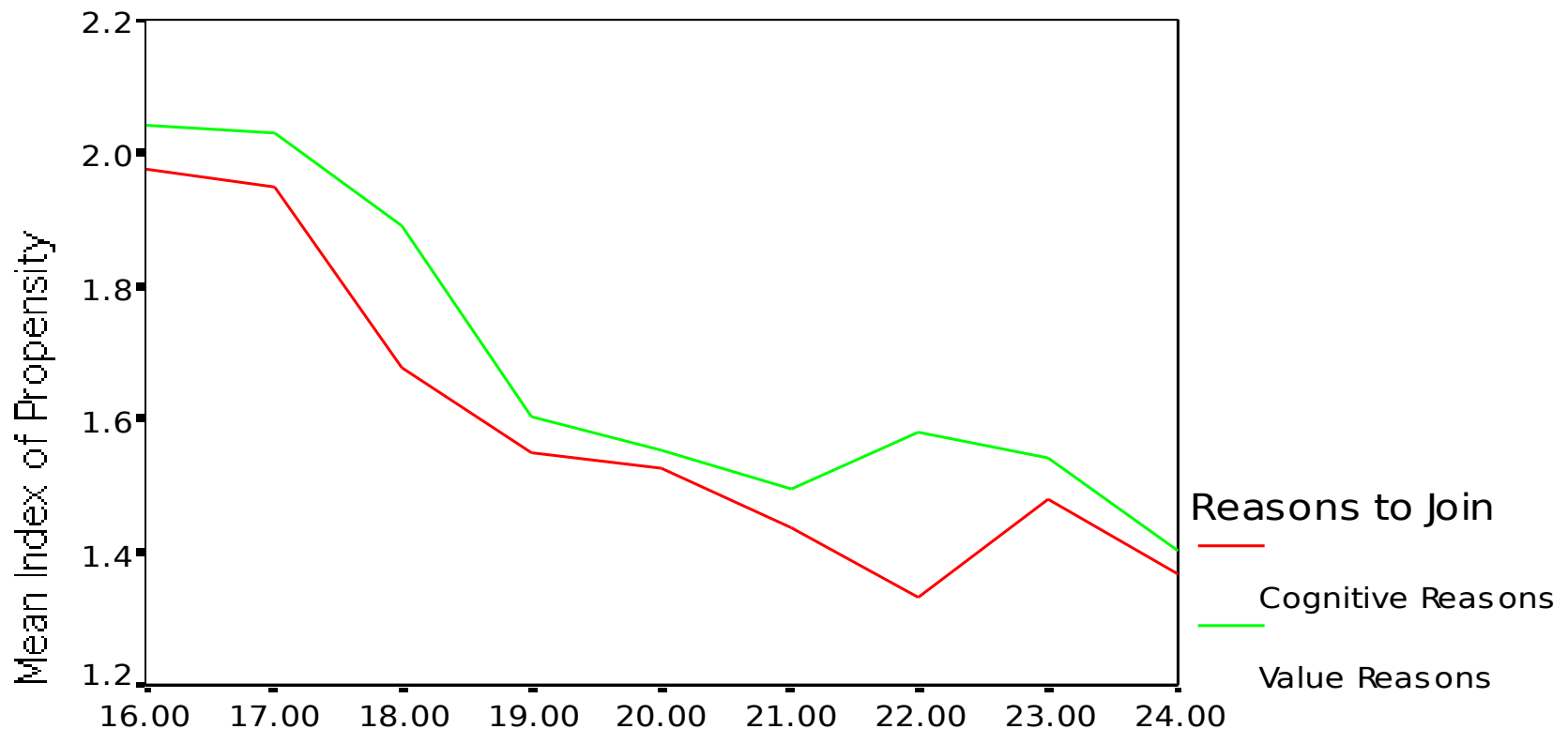
Correlation Matrix:

	Q438a	Q503p	Q517
Q438a	1.0000		
Q503p	0.4026	1.0000	
Q517	0.6063	0.4049	1.0000

Q438a, Q517, and Q503p

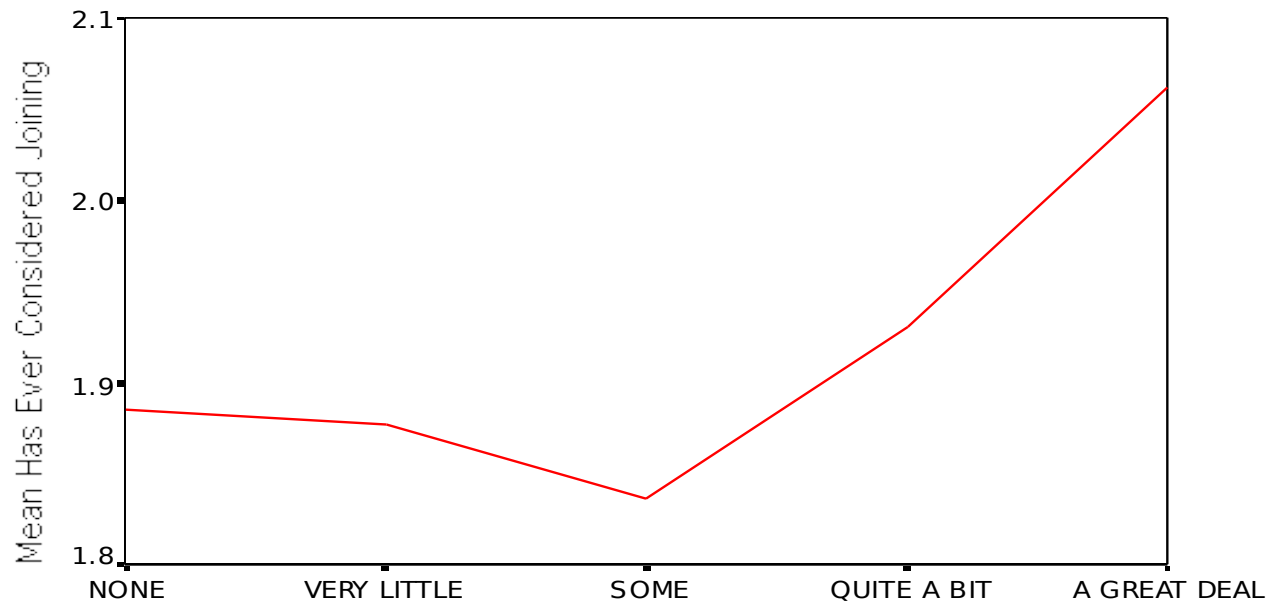
Value Frame Respondents Show Higher Propensity

Graph shows main effects of age (0.0001) and reasons to join (0.006) with no interaction. Those giving value oriented reasons to join exhibit more positive levels of propensity.



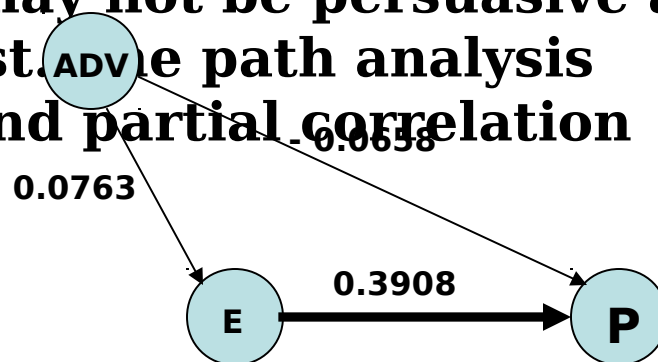
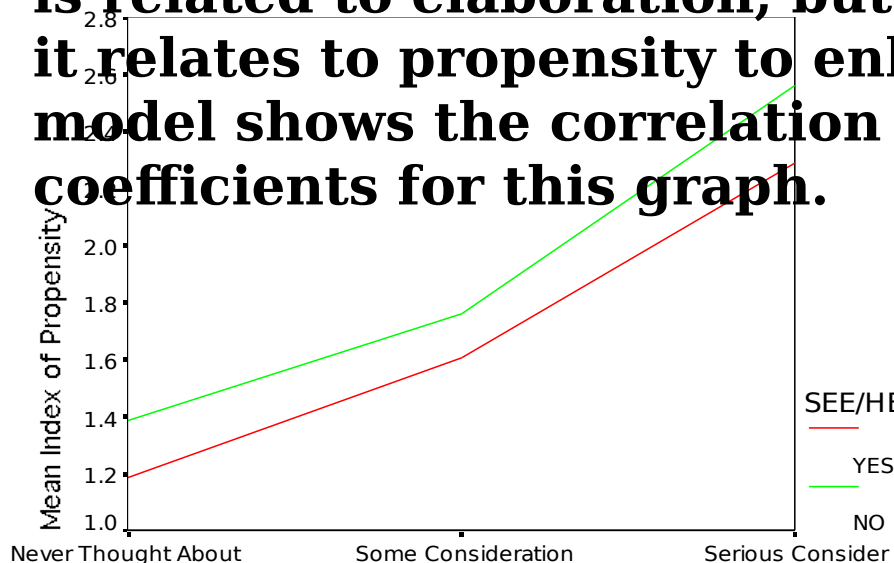
Elaboration is Promoted by Television News

The graph shows the relationship between attention to TV news and elaboration (0.0001). This pattern holds for those giving either cognitive or value oriented reasons to join. There is a hint of a curvilinear relationship with elaboration declining and then increasing sharply as reported attention to TV news reaches its highest levels. The graph also suggests propensity might be supported by directing app
high



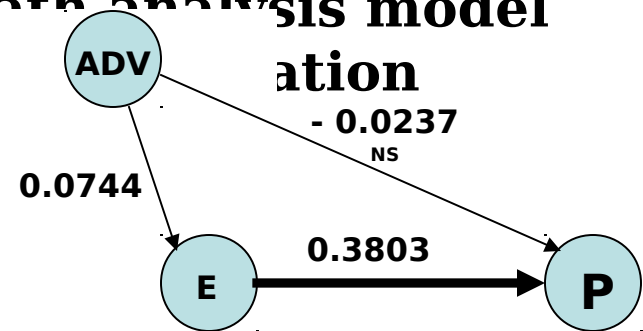
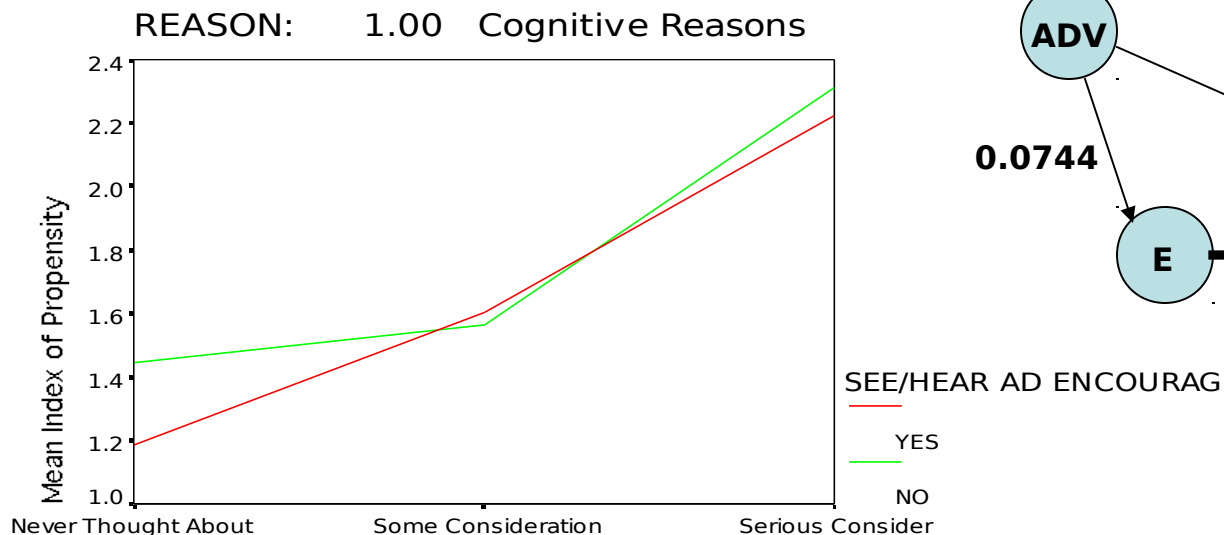
Advertising Promotes Elaboration But Not Propensity

Overall, 88 percent of the respondents say they recall seeing or hearing advertising for the military in the past year. The graph shows the main effects of recall of advertising that encouraged people to enlist (0.0001) and elaboration (0.001) on propensity to enlist. Those reporting they do recall such advertising show a lower propensity than those who do not. It appears recall of advertising is related to elaboration, but may not be persuasive as it relates to propensity to enlist. The path analysis model shows the correlation and partial correlation coefficients for this graph.



Advertising Recall Is Not Associated with Propensity Among Those with Cognitive Reasons to Join

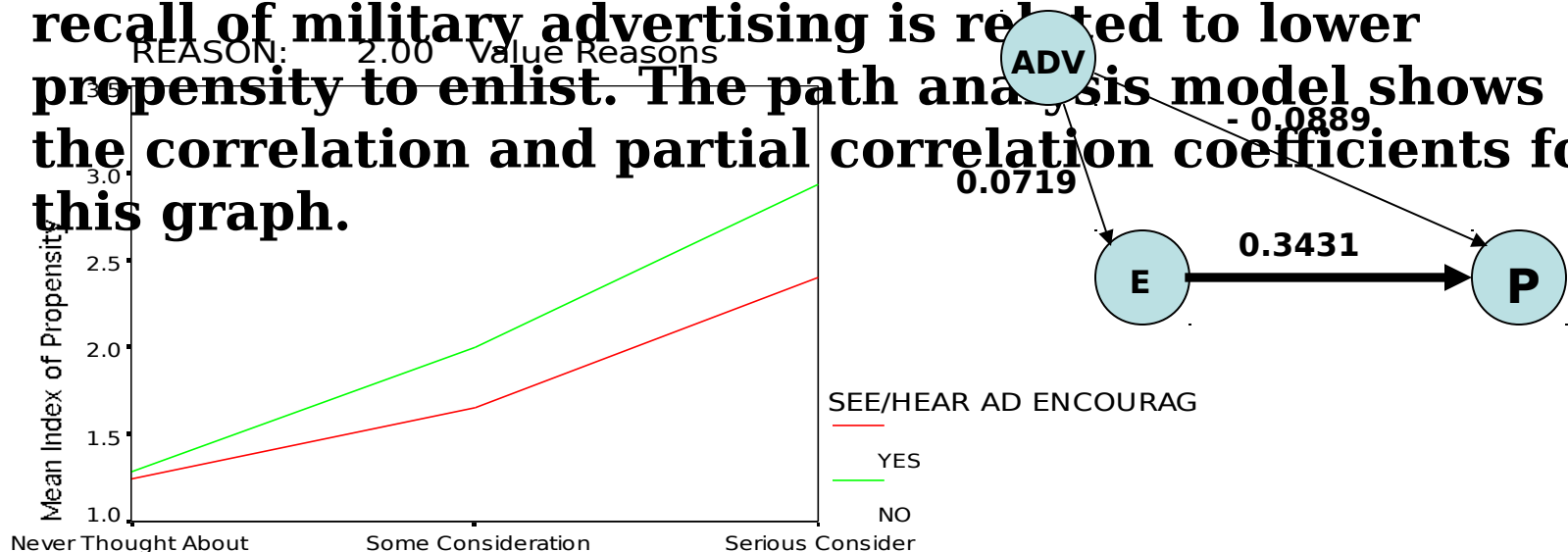
The graph applies only to those giving cognitive reasons to join, and shows the main effect of elaboration (0.001) on propensity. There is a suggestion of a main effect of recall of advertising (0.165) and an interaction between elaboration and recall (0.125). For those giving cognitive reasons to join, recall of military advertising does not appear to be related to propensity. The path analysis model



Advertising Recall is Associated with Lower Propensity Among Those with Value Oriented Reasons to Join

The graph applies only to those giving value oriented reasons to join, and shows the main effect of elaboration (0.001) on propensity. There is a main effect of recall of advertising (0.01) and a hint of interaction between elaboration and recall (0.273).

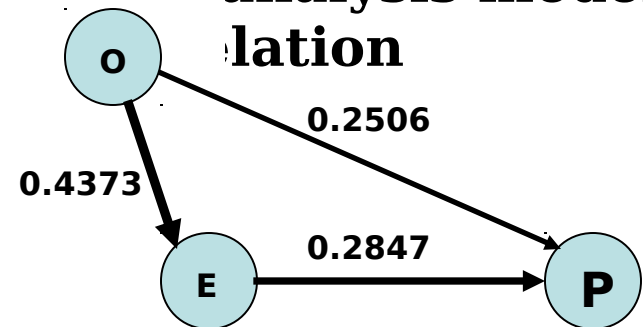
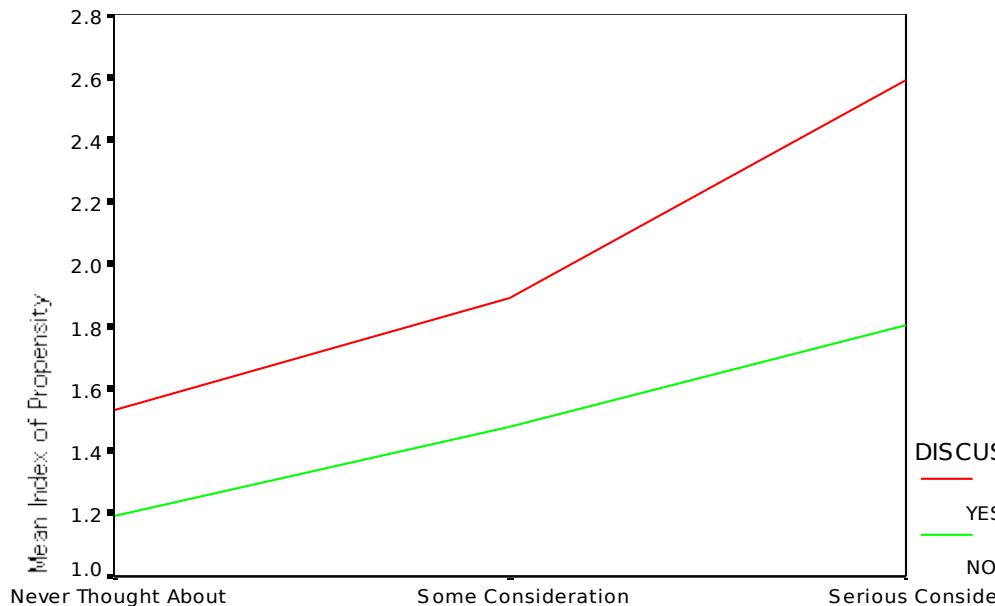
Among those giving value oriented reasons to join, recall of military advertising is related to lower propensity to enlist. The path analysis model shows the correlation and partial correlation coefficients for this graph.



Discussion with Others Promotes Elaboration and Propensity

Overall, 30 percent of the respondents say they discussed the possibility of serving in the military with someone other than a recruiter during the past year. The graph shows the main effects of discussion with anyone other than a military recruiter (0.0001) and elaboration (0.001) on propensity to enlist. Discussion with others interacts with elaboration (0.0001) at the

analysis model



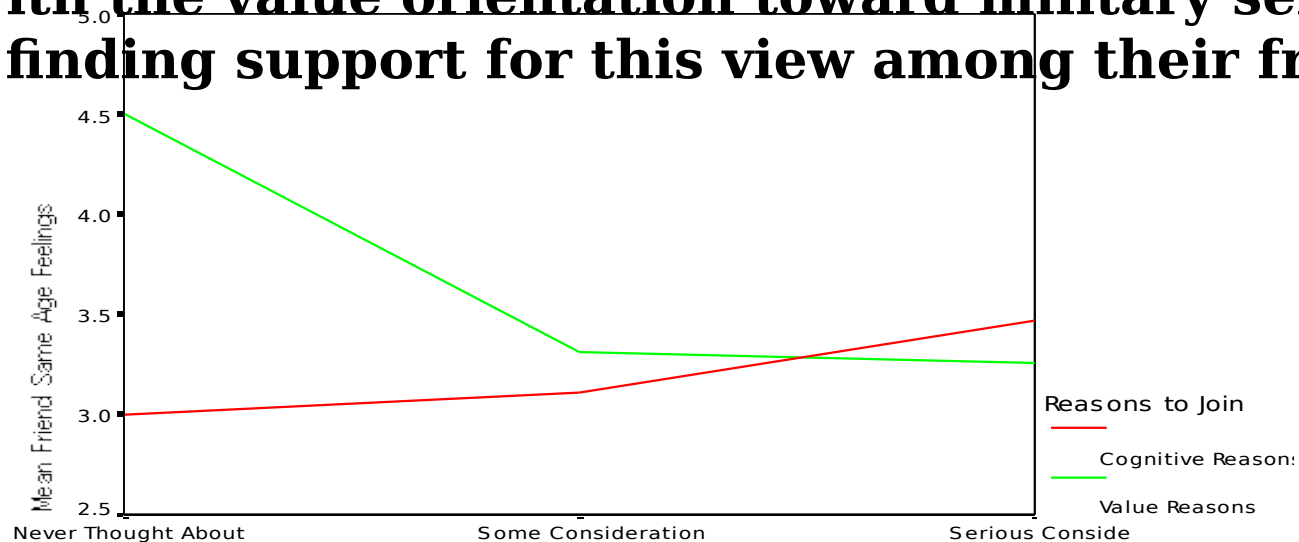
DISCUSSED MILITARY S

YES

NO

Elaboration Is Not Supported by Peer Group Attitudes for Those with Value Oriented Reasons to Join

The graph shows a main effect of reason to join (0.046) on whether a friend would approve of the respondent serving in the military. Also, there is an interaction between elaboration and reason to join (0.038). Those with cognitive and value oriented reasons to join have different perceptions of their friends' views about the military until they engage in the process of elaboration. This suggests youth with the value orientation toward military services are not finding support for this view among their friends.



An Overall Path Analysis

Significant (< 0.05) partial correlations are shown for paths leading to propensity (P).

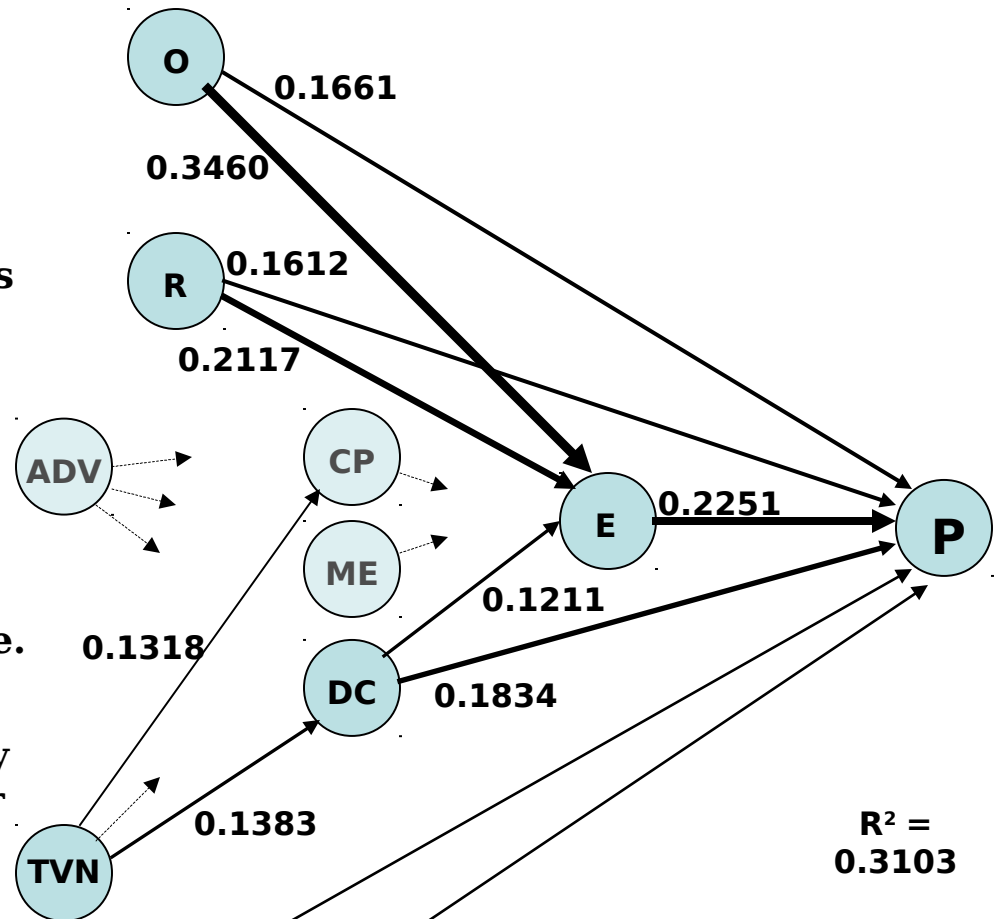
The coefficients enable decomposition of the relationships among the variables.

Elaboration (E) is shown to be an important mediating variable.

The importance of duty to country (DC) plays a noteworthy role, while importance of career preparation (CP) and money for education (ME) do not.

Contact with recruiters (R) and friends and family (O) play noteworthy roles, while advertising recall (ADV) does not.

Advertising recall (ADV) and the current primary advertising messages (CP and ME) do not show



$R^2 = 0.3103$

Also, attention to television news (TVN) relates positively to the importance of duty to country (DC) and career preparation (CP). GPA and age relate negatively to the propensity index (P).

Summary and Recommendations

The distinction between cognitive (or purposive) and value oriented frames showed consistent relationships relating to elaboration, media use, advertising, personal communication, and propensity to enlist.

Elaboration serves a mediating role between variables such as media use and propensity to enlist in the military.

Certain means of communication (such as personal communication and visits with recruiters) have direct effects on the promotion of propensity (in addition to those mediated by elaboration).

Recall of advertising shows questionable effects on elaboration and propensity, suggesting evaluation of message strategies is needed.

The value oriented frame involving duty to country (the noble aspects of military service) consistently showed stronger effects on propensity to enlist than the cognitive (or purposive) approach.

The value orientation toward joining the military has attractions

It is about Values



Television commercial reflecting
on values concerning freedom.